

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01

INR-05 L-01 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 /055 W

----- 009061

R 061807Z NOV 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5440

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 14495

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK

SUBJECT: QUEEN'S SPEECH DEBATE CONCLUDES, BUT FALL
OUT REMAINS

REF: A) LONDON 14394, B) LONDON 14372, C) LONDON 14302

1. PARLIAMENT'S DEBATE OF QUEEN'S SPEECH CONCLUDED EVE-
NING OF NOVEMBER 5 WITH VARIOUS OPPOSITION AMENDMENTS
CRITICAL OF DISCRETE ASPECTS OF LABOR'S PROGRAM PROPOSALS
DEFEATED BY EVEN LARGER MAJORITIES THAN 14 VOTE MARGIN BY
WHICH TORY ANTI-NATIONALIZATION AMENDMENT FAILED (REF A).
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DESPITE DIFFERENCES WITHIN PARLIAMENTARY LABOR PARTY

(PLP) OVER SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT (REF B) WHICH WERE RAISED IN DEBATE, PLP WAS COHESIVE ON ALL VOTES, WHILE COMBINED OPPOSITION WAS FRAGMENTED AND PLAGUED BY ABSENCES. CONSERVATIVES, MOREOVER, OFTEN APPEARED PREOCCUPIED WITH THEIR OWN LEADERSHIP DIFFICULTIES. RESULTS OF DEBATE SUPPORT OUR EARLIER JUDGEMENT THAT LABOR CAN EXPECT TO ENJOY A SOLID WORKING MAJORITY, EXCEPT ON THOSE ISSUES ON WHICH THE PLP IS BITTERLY DIVIDED. ALTHOUGH GOVERNMENT'S MINI-BUDGET (EXPECTED NEXT WEEK) WILL NO DOUBT CAUSE SOME DISAGREEMENT WITHIN PLP, THE ONLY ISSUE WHICH CURRENTLY APPEARS TO MEET THE "BITTERLY DIVIDED" CRITERION IS THAT OF CONTINUED UK MEMBERSHIP IN EC.

2. DEBATE ON QUEEN'S SPEECH ALSO SERVED AS BACKDROP FOR INTERNAL LABOR PARTY DISPUTE OVER PRIME MINISTER'S EFFORTS TO ENSURE GOVERNMENTAL UNITY (REF C). THIS QUESTION PROVIDES NEW FOCUS FOR LONG-STANDING STRUGGLE FOR SUPREMACY BETWEEN PARTY MODERATES AND LEFT WING AND IN WHICH LEFT WING HAS RECENTLY ENJOYED ADVANTAGE. INDICATIONS ARE THAT WILSON'S COLLECTIVE GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBILITY DICTUM WILL BE PRINCIPAL QUESTION AT LABOR PARTY'S ANNUAL CONFERENCE NOVEMBER 27-30. LEFT HAS TRADITIONALLY SOUGHT TO ASSERT SUPREMACY OF ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND ITS ORGAN, THE NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE (NEC), OVER PLP ON MATTERS OF GOVERNMENT POLICY, AND THIS TIME THE LEFT BELIEVES THE STAKES ARE ESPECIALLY HIGH. LEFT WINGERS SEEM CONVINCED THAT A MAJORITY OF THE CABINET WILL SUPPORT CONTINUED UK MEMBERSHIP, ASSUMING RENEGOTIATIONS GO REASONABLY WELL, AND FEEL THAT THEIR BEST, AND PERHAPS ONLY, CHANCE TO TAKE BRITAIN OUT LIES WITH MAKING THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE TO THE CONFERENCE AND NEC. WHILE WE DO NOT FIND MUCH EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE LEFT'S READING OF CABINET INTENTIONS, THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF THE SITUATION INDICATE THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE WILL BE EVEN MORE HEATED AND CONTENTIOUS THAN IS USUAL. WE WILL BE REPORTING FURTHER ON PRE-CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTS.

SOHM

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLITICAL SITUATION, SIMONSTOWN AGREEMENT, SPEECHES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 06 NOV 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: golinofr
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LONDON14495
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740319-0638
From: LONDON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19741167/aaaacepn.tel
Line Count: 98
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: A) LONDON 14394, B) LONDON 14372, C)
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: golinofr
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 APR 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 APR 2002 by martinml>; APPROVED <08-Aug-2002 by golinofr>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: QUEEN'S SPEECH DEBATE CONCLUDES, BUT FALL OUT REMAINS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, UK, LABOR PARTY, (ELIZABETH II)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005